

Michigan Department of Community Health – Bureau of Laboratories

May 11, 2004

Dear Colleagues:

The Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) in a press release on May 11 reported the first West Nile virus positive bird for the 2004 season. The bird was collected in Saginaw County. We anticipate this will prompt interest in and requests for testing of human clinical samples.

As in the past season, MDCH Bureau of Laboratories (BOL) is offering seasonal testing of Arbovirus Panel from May 1<sup>st</sup> through October 31<sup>st</sup>, as indicated on the Microbiology/ Virology Test Requisition form (DCH-0583). Please follow the specimen submission guidelines available at the website <http://www.michigan.gov/emergingdiseases> (under West Nile Virus, follow WNV diagnosis link).

Cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) is the preferred specimen for serologic testing by IgM MAC-ELISA (IgM Capture enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay). A single serum specimen for IgM MAC ELISA is NOT recommended due to endemicity of WNV in the state. Paired sera (an acute serum sample drawn at least 8 days post onset of symptoms and a convalescent serum specimen drawn at least 22 days post onset) should be submitted if CSF is not obtained. Specimens may be submitted (in plastic tubes only) to the MDCH BOL via postal service, FedEx, UPS, or courier. Transportation may be at ambient temperatures.

As serologic testing is more broadly available this year from non-public health laboratories, clinical laboratories should familiarize themselves with the limitations in specificity that may be an issue with such testing. Antigens typically used in WNV serologic assays show significant cross reactivity with other Arboviruses; additional testing (specific assay with separate WNV and SLE antigens) is necessary to establish the etiologic agent. **For this reason, samples tested outside of the public health system will need to be retested at the BOL. Please either retain a portion of such specimens for submission to the BOL or request the testing laboratory to forward positive samples to the BOL.**

If you have any questions on any aspect of Arbovirus testing, please contact Patty Clark at 517-335-8102.

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